(b) if so, what will be the status of Panchayati Raj system; and

(c) the details of the separate law on Panchayati Courts?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) No Sir. However, the question of bringing in a legislation to provide for the establishment of Gram Nyayalayas for the purposes of access to justice, both civil and criminal, to the citizens at the grassroots level and ensuring them an opportunity for securing justice is being studied by the Government in the Ministry of Law & Justice.

(b) and (c) Does not arise.

Financial and administrative powers to PRIs

†673. SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) what steps Government propose to take to provide financial and administrative powers to Panchayati Raj Institutions in the country;

(b) whether positive results have been achieved as a result of the steps taken previously, if so, the details thereof;

(c) the steps Government have taken to review the functions of various Panchyati Raj Institutions; and

(d) the action being taken by Government to resolve the problems posed by the representatives of these Institutions?

THE MINISTER OF PANCHAYATI RAJ (SHRI MANI SHANKAR AIYAR): (a) to (d) In order to evolve a national consensus on the measures to be taken to strengthen Panchayati Raj and ensure that Panchayati Raj Institutions function as institutions of self-government as envisaged in Part IX of the Constitution, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj convened Seven Round Tables of State Ministers of Panchayati Raj between July, 2004 and December, 2004. At the Round Tables, about 150 points for action, covering 18 dimensions of Panchayati Raj, were formulated by consensus. *Inter-alia*, these cover points of action pertaining to both the Centre and the States, relating to the effective devolution of functions, funds and functionaries to Panchayats.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

A Council of State Ministers of Panchyati Raj under the Chairmanship of the Union Minister for Panchayati Raj has been constituted to review the implementation of the recommendations. The first meeting fo the Council was held on 5th-6th August, 2005 at Kochi, Kerala. A Committee of Chief Secretaries of States and State Panchayati Raj Secretaries has also been constituted under the Chairmanship of the Union Secretary (Panchayati Raj) to monitor the progress on the implementation of the 150 recommendations of the Seven Round Tables and the decisions of the Council of States Ministers of Panchayati Raj. Four review meetings of the Committee have so far been held in April, 2005, June, 2005, September, 2005, and November 2005.

With a view to interacting with Panchayats and carrying out a review with the authorities concerned of the progresss in implementing the points for action mutually agreed to in the round Tables, a process of visiting the States and UTs at the level of Union Minister for Panchayati Raj has been initiated. Seven States have been covered so far. These include Karnataka, West Bengal, Uttaranchal, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Arunachal Pradesh. Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh are next on the list. Each visit is concluded with a Statement of Conclusions jointly signed with the Chief Minister of the State concerned, laying out the points of action on which the State would move to operationalise the recommendations of the Round Tables.

An exercise is underway to review different statutes with a view to harmonise them with the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution. Similarly, the guidelines of Centrally Sponsored Schemes are being reviewed to ensure the centrality of Panchayats in planning and implementation. As regards new Centrally Sponsored Schemes, wherever relevant, it is proposed to provide for a central role for Panchayats. Thus, for example, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act provides for the Panchayats to be the "principal authorities" for the planning and implementation of schemes under the Act. Steps are also being taken to fill in citical gaps in infrastructure and capacity so that Panchayats can effectively fulfill their constitutional role.

Setting up of Gram Nyayalayas

674. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of PANCHAYATI RAJ be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to set up 'Gram Nyayalayas' in the country to provide easy, cheap and speedy justice to the people;